

SASK RIGHTS

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A newsletter of news, information and resources from
the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

Commission launches new Equity Program and releases new Equity report

The Commission recently launched its new Equity Program in Regina and Saskatoon. The event brought together our equity partners from around the province and provided the Commission with the opportunity to release its new equity report, *Working Together*.

The Commission's new equity program arose out of a comprehensive review prompted by challenges facing Saskatchewan's social and economic environment and the need for faster results in the development of diverse workplaces and learning environments. The Commission believes it is necessary to develop a culture of inclusion which is committed to the engagement, contribution and success of all residents of the province. Through its new equity program, the Commission will provide organizations with assistance to help achieve these goals.

The new Equity Program and procedures are based on modern circumstances, broader principles and a simpler process, making it easier for equity partners to obtain Commission approval and services. It is founded on principles of flexibility, accessibility, expansion, innovation and accountability. It streamlines procedures,

opens up approvals to a wide range of initiatives, and shifts its focus from regulation and monitoring to capacity building and partnerships. Organizations can use equity programs by themselves or blend them with other strategies to promote equality, diversity and mutual respect.

Working Together reflects on the important role of Aboriginal people, women, people with disabilities, visible minorities and other equity group members in our province's future. The report can be downloaded from the SHRC site or ordered free-of-charge from the Government of Saskatchewan Publications Centre: <http://publications.gov.sk.ca>.



Chief Commissioner Donna Scott speaks with Gilles Dorval, Employment Equity Consultant for the City of Saskatoon.

Equity seal now available for equity partners

An SHRC equity seal has been developed to promote and help implement the equity programs of partners. It confirms an organization's status as an active equity sponsor as approved under section 47 of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. The seal also signifies an organization's partnership role in the broader goal of developing inclusive workplaces and classrooms.

The seal can be used in a variety of ways, such as adding it to job postings and advertisements to verify an employer's right to invite applications from members of equity groups. It may also be used in promotional materials or correspondence to indicate an organization's commitment to the principles of fairness, equity and inclusion. On job advertisements, it is recom-

mended that the seal be combined with wording that clarifies which equity groups are being invited to apply for positions.

Organizations are entitled to use the seal if they have a current SHRC-approved equity program.



SaskRights is Back! With this issue, we are happy to launch a new, electronic version of *SaskRights* which picks up where the previous, print version left off. *SaskRights* will be published quarterly.

New seminar series well received

The Commission's 2007 public education seminar series drew impressive numbers in Saskatoon, La Ronge, Regina, and Prince Albert in February and March. The half-day seminars covered the prohibited grounds of discrimination covered by the *Code*, the complaint process, the duty to accommodate, and harassment prevention. The series was attended by a diverse range of participants.

As part of the Commission's commitment to improving services to northern and Aboriginal residents, two of the four seminars were offered in Prince Albert and La Ronge.

The Commission will also offer in-depth seminars on "The Duty to Accommodate" on the afternoons of May 15th in Regina and May 16th in Saskatoon. Presented by Bill Rafoss, Supervisor of Mediations & Investigations, the half-day seminar will cover the duty to accommodate characteristics identified in *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, and review the current state of the law and emerging legal trends. For more information or to register for this free seminar, contact Reggie Newkirk at (306) 787-7105 or rnewkirk@shrc.gov.sk.ca.

Settlements

Injured employee settles disability complaint for \$14,000

When an employee injured his back while on the job, he took a medical leave and received WCB benefits. In a letter to WCB, however, his employer cast aspersions on the legitimacy of the claim, alleging that the employee was embroiled in some work place issues and that his injury was related to an earlier non-work related condition.

When he was ready, the employee was accommodated with a graduated return to work program, doing marginally meaningful work for up to four hours per day.

After a series of assessments, WCB accepted the allegations that his condition was not related to the specific workplace injury and his WCB claim was discontinued. His employer then terminated him, saying they couldn't afford to keep him on. They paid him for two weeks in lieu of notice, although Labour Standards legislation recommends four weeks.

In settling, the respondent agreed to pay the complainant \$1,000 in payment of dental benefits, and a severance payment of \$13,000.

Cab company develops and implements a service animal policy in response to complaint

A blind man was allegedly refused taxi service at an airport by three taxi drivers because his service dog was not in a box. The complainant alleged that he was discriminated against by the owners and operators of three taxis because of his disability, contrary to section 12 of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*.

In settling the complaint, the corporate respondent developed and implemented an updated Service Animal Policy and placed window stickers in all taxi cabs indicating "Service Dogs Welcome." They also agreed to pay the complainant \$1,500 as compensation for injury to feelings.

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